

What is claimed is:

1 1. An information gathering system, comprising:
2 at least one computer;
3 an identification database accessible by the computer, the
4 identification database including user identification information;
5 at least one output device coupled to the computer; and
6 a software component executable by the at least one computer, the
software component being arranged to validate the user and cause the computer to
provide output on the output device corresponding to a customized ballot prepared
based upon a validated user response to a specified request for information.

2 2. The system according to claim 1, further comprising an input device
coupled to the computer wherein the software component is further arranged to
3 read a completed customized ballot from the input device, check the completed
4 customized ballot for errors and to cause the computer to provide output to the
5 output device corresponding to the completed customized ballot.

1 3. The system according to claim 1, wherein the software component is
2 also arranged to assign a unique identifier to the validated user.

1 4. The system according to claim 3, further including a forms database
2 accessible by the computer, the forms database including form formatting and
3 content information.

1 5. The system according to claim 4, wherein the forms database
2 corresponds to an official ballot forms database.

1 6. The system according to claim 3, further comprising:
2 a tabulation database accessible by the validated user by verifying
3 the unique identifier assigned to the validated user.

1 7. The system according to claim 6, wherein the tabulation database
2 corresponds to an official vote tabulation database.

1 8. The system according to claim 6, wherein the validated user accesses
2 the tabulation database via a communication network.

1 9. The system according to claim 8, wherein the communication
2 network is the Internet.

1 10. The system according to claim 3, wherein the unique identifier is a
2 randomly generated number.

1 11. The system according to claim 1, wherein the specified request for
2 information includes at least one of a request for validated user's address and a
3 request for an allowable language preference.

1 12. A method of gathering information about a user using a computer,
2 comprising:

3 verifying that the user is eligible to participate by consulting a first
4 database;

5 assigning a unique identifier to an eligible user;

6 customizing a questionnaire by consulting a second database;

7 requiring the eligible user to provide to the computer a response to
8 the questionnaire;

9 producing a first tangible record of the response;

10 producing a second tangible record of the response;

11 collecting the second tangible record; and

12 storing the second tangible record.

1 13. The method according to claim 12, further comprising rejecting
2 users not listed in the first database.

1 14. The method according to claim 13, wherein requiring the verified
2 user to provide to the computer a response to the questionnaire comprises:
3 inputting the response into the computer;
4 checking the response by comparing the response to a selected
5 standard;
6 rejecting the response if the response does not meet the requirements
7 of the selected standard; and
8 requiring the verified user to correct the rejected response.

1 15. The method according to claim 14, wherein the selected standard
2 includes a single choice indicated for each individual questionnaire item.

1 16. The method according to claim 14, wherein the first database is an
2 identification database comprised of user identification information.

1 17. The method according to claim 14, wherein the first database
2 corresponds to an official voter registration database.

1 18. The method according to claim 14, wherein the first database is
2 comprised of a list of registered voters.

1 19. The method according to claim 12, wherein the second database is a
2 forms database, the forms database being comprised of form formatting and
3 content information.

20. A method of voting using a computer, the method comprising:
checking the eligibility of a potential voter by accessing a voter
eligibility database;
rejecting the potential voter who is deemed to be a non-eligible
voter;
receiving an address of an eligible voter;
customizing a ballot based on a selected criteria by accessing a ballot
form database;
displaying the ballot to the eligible voter;
receiving the ballot from the eligible voter;
checking the ballot for errors by comparing the ballot to a selected
standard;
printing an official ballot;

15 collecting the official ballot; and
16 printing a receipt to be retained by the eligible voter.

1 21. The method according to claim 20, further comprising:
2 assigning a unique identifier to the eligible voter;
3 causing the unique identifier to be printed on the receipt and the
4 official ballot;
 updating a voting results database with the ballot received from the
 eligible voter ;
 providing access to the voting results database to the eligible voter;
 and
 requiring the eligible voter to input the unique identifier in order to
 gain access to the voting results database.

1 22. The method according to claim 20, wherein the selected criteria
2 includes at least one of the eligible voter's address and allowable language
3 preference.

1 23. The method according to claim 21, wherein the unique identifier is a
2 randomly generated number.

1 24. The method according to claim 20, further comprising receiving
2 language preferences from the voter.

1 25. The method according to claim 20, further comprising receiving
2 handicap access preferences from the voter.

1 26. The method according to claim 24, further comprising receiving
2 handicap preferences from the voter.

1 27. The method according to claim 21, wherein the voting results
2 database corresponds to an official voting results database.

1 28. An information gathering system, comprising:
2 means for identifying a user;
3 means for verifying the user's status to participate in the information
4 gathering system;
5 means for assigning a unique identifier to the user;
6 means for displaying a customized questionnaire, the customized
7 questionnaire prompting the user to enter at least a first response to at least one
8 question on the customized questionnaire;

9 means for storing the at least first response;
10 means for producing a tangible record of at least the first response
11 and the unique identifier;
12 means for allowing the user to compare the tangible record with the
13 at least first response; and
14 means for correcting a discrepancy between the tangible record and the first
15 response.

29. A method of gathering information, comprising:
identifying a user;
verifying the user's status to participate in the information gathering
system;
assigning a unique identifier to the user;
displaying a customized questionnaire, wherein the user is prompted
to enter at least a first response to at least one question on the customized
questionnaire;
storing the at least first response;
producing a tangible record of at least the first response and the
unique identifier, wherein the user retains the tangible record;
allowing the user to compare the tangible record with the at least
first response; and

14 correcting a discrepancy between the tangible record and the first
15 response.

1 30. A method of voting which preserves the secrecy of the ballot while
2 allowing a voter to verify the integrity of a vote, comprising:
3 checking the eligibility of a potential voter by accessing a voter
4 eligibility database;
5 generating and assigning a unique identifier to an eligible voter;
6 printing a customized ballot which conforms to one or more selected
7 criteria;
8 scanning the completed ballot;
9 comparing the scanned ballot with a predetermined standard to detect
10 voter errors;
11 printing an error report if an error is detected;
12 printing an official ballot and a receipt if no errors are detected;
13 collecting the official ballot; and
14 storing the official ballot.

1 31. The method according to claim 27, further comprising providing
2 voting instructions to the voter.

1 32. The method according to claim 27, further comprising:
2 providing an opportunity to register a first time voter if the potential
3 voter is determined to be eligible.

1 33. The method according to claim 30, further comprising:
2 updating a voting results database with the ballot received from the
3 eligible voter;
4 providing access to the voting results database to the eligible voter;
5 and
6 requiring the eligible voter to input the unique identifier in order to
7 gain access to the voting results database.